

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Administration Building Auditorium
15 Charter Road, Acton

June 9, 2022
7:00 p.m.

To view only: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah (7:40 p.m.), Kyra Cook, Liz Fowlks, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Andrew Schwartz, Yebin Wang (7:08 p.m.), Rebeccah Wilson
Members Absent: Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Ben Bloomenthal
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. Call to Order (7:00)

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Vice-Chair Kyra Cook in the Chairperson's absence. She stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

2. Chairperson's Welcome - Kyra Cook

Liz Fowlks, the new member from Boxborough, was welcomed to her first meeting.

a. Student Representative Update -

(Depre Carr, Sivapriya Marimuthu, Rohan Ravindran, Molly Norris)

Molly Norris urged the Administration to publicize the new gender neutral bathrooms at the High School because many people are unaware of them and they are an important way to make people more comfortable. She noted that at WPI, all bathrooms are not gender neutral. Rohan Ravindran agreed that this was an important addition for everyone. He reflected on "the wildest year" they had had, getting accustomed to masks, boosters, and just being around each other again. One of his biggest concerns was if the High School wifi could handle all the students' chromebooks. Whether controversial like dropping the mask mandate or the mascot debate, or small, like all the wasps, they found solutions together and things worked out. Rohan thanked the School Committee for representing the students and their best interests.

Kyra thanked all of the student reps for sharing their valuable insight this year.

b. Public Participation

Kyra welcomed comments from the public, asking that all be civil.

A member expressed frustration with the budget cut to classroom assistants for next year given the social behavior issues that are being seen. She also questioned the changes to leveled courses at the High School and grading.

Another member continued to express his anger with the decision to change the mascot, citing comments made by a School Committee member at the last meeting regarding connotations of the word “Revolution”, and the Committee’s lack of specific response to it. He also continued to criticize Committee members regarding his public records request from November 2020.

The Vice-Chair noted that Mr. Benson was not complying with her request to be civil while speaking.

c. **Superintendent’s Update**

Marie Altieri updated the Committee on Administrative Hiring for the next school year, in the Superintendent’s absence. Many positions have been filled, with a few more to go. The Committee appreciated that seven educators of color including three assistant principals have been hired.

3. **Guests and Presentations**

a. **Approval of \$50,000 Acton Boxborough Student Activities Fund (ABSAF) Donation - VOTE - Marie Alteri**

ABSAF president Shelley Moore and representatives of the ABSAF Board presented the Committee with \$50,000 that they raised this year. This will be combined with last year’s \$10,000 (set aside due to covid) for \$60,000 of support as we move back into full operations of our athletic events, performing arts and student activities. The Committee was very appreciative of ABSAF’s ongoing support, especially during covid and the current environment.

Andrew Schwartz moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to gratefully accept this generous donation from ABSAF.

b. **Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) Report –**

SEPAC Co-Chairs Amanda Bailey, Kara Lafferty and Abe Gutierrez, presented their Spring update. They spoke about the group’s mission, role and priorities. Out of District themes, survey objectives, trainings & workshops, as well as addressing and removing barriers to SEPAC participation and leadership were also covered. Members thanked Jennifer Truslow, Director of Special Education, Superintendent Peter Light, and the School Committee for their ongoing collaboration and support. FY23 SEPAC officers will be elected at their meeting on June 15th.

Marie Altieri and the School Committee thanked Amanda, Kara and Abe for their tireless and amazing efforts on behalf of our students and families. A member asked how the Committee can help them. Amanda replied that they have tried to connect families who have been/are in isolation. Transportation is sometimes an issue for families but it is being worked on. A member encouraged them to specifically look for opportunities for families of color because “it really impacts them”. Jennifer agreed but added that children requiring transportation are our most vulnerable students and there are rules that the District has to follow

regarding using private cars, ubers, and taxis. Jennifer welcomed people to send her suggestions to explore.

A Committee member asked what the District and the Committee should think about regarding our youngest students who started their school experience during the pandemic and who will “suffer from that until they graduate”. What should especially be considered regarding these students with special needs and those that are not identified yet? Amanda responded that a lot of early intervention was missed during covid because children didn’t see their pediatricians, and this is often the first time where issues are caught. Transition planning was also missed entirely for the young and older students (including career training). These issues will exist for a long time for these kids.

The Committee has talked about how AB is losing students to charter and vocational tech schools. It was asked what percentage of those students are on IEPs. Marie Altieri said that we have more kids going to Minuteman Tech and charter schools now, particularly with Minuteman’s new building and programs. She will try to find the percentage.

c. Approval of ABRHS Handbook Changes - First Read

ABRHS Principal, Joanie Dean, began by congratulating the 444 seniors who graduated last Friday night. She thanked all the educators and staff for all that they have done.

She reviewed the two proposed changes to the High School handbook for next year. Neither change is comprehensive and the staff knows there is a lot of work to be done to update the entire documents. A comprehensive look was not possible because it was her first year and due to all of the covid effects. The High School will start the NEASC process in the fall that will culminate in Oct 2025. This is our accreditation agency and the process will be instrumental for updating the handbook. She said that the handbook “reads in a certain way” and the Administration wants to look at it through a restorative lens, not just a disciplinary one. Even though some of those aspects are not codified or spelled out in the current handbook, there are mechanisms for individuals and groups to receive education and restoration in actual practice. They do plan to reorganize some of the online handbook materials so it may look slightly different next year. Much of the handbook language has to be legally approved so that also takes time.

Change 1. Attendance

Staff want to follow up more quickly with absent students and understand what’s going on in real time so supports can be offered, and not wait until the end of the year. The real intention is to help students get back in class to the academics. They will have more of a team model to work with students.

Change 2. Clarity around Grading for Teachers

A more reasonable expected time frame is provided for students to submit outstanding assignments in the interim period. Extenuating circumstances may warrant extensions. A Pass Option may be offered under certain conditions.

Comments from the Committee included:

- This is a remarkably passionate way of addressing some of these issues.
- The Fall MASC conference offered a workshop on NEASC that was very valuable and gives a good perspective on how decisions are made at the High School. We should watch for this workshop because it was very informative.
- Reviewing the handbook is a huge process. There was agreement with waiting until after the NEASC review.
- These changes will specifically benefit black and brown kids. The restorative practices is the way to go.
- Does the word “truancy” have to be used? Can we define what truancy means? Joanie agrees and will check with the lawyers because it is a legal term. She prefers “unexcused absence”.
- Does the Junior High have the same type of policy? They do not because they are scheduled for class every day and don’t have an open campus. The Jr High’s team model provides more supervision so adults know where kids are.

This is a First Read of the changes. A Second Read and vote will be done on June 16.

4. **Ongoing Business (8:00)**

a. ~~**Preliminary Input on FY23 District Goals & Central Office Organization–**~~

~~*Peter Light*~~ This item will be addressed at our next meeting on June 16th when Mr. Light returns.

b. **EDCO Update**

Peter attended this meeting and everything is on track. They are waiting for a letter from the Commissioner. After June 30, once all is complete and the financials are done, the District expects to get back \$60-70,000.

c. **Subcommittee and Members’ Reports**

i. Budget Subcommittee - *Kyra Cook 5/23/22*

Members were updated on FY23 and debriefed about Town Meetings. They will work on how the narrative of the budget is brought to Town Meeting. The narrative occurs year round and needs to begin sooner. Next Budget subcommittee meeting will meet in Sept 2022.

d. **Consent Agenda - VOTE - *Kyra Cook***

i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 5/19/22

ii. Approval of Remaining FY22 Subcommittee Minutes (including the Budget, Capital Improvements, Community Engagement, Debt Strategy, Mascot Screening and Policy subcommittees)

There were no holds to Consent Agenda items.

Tessa McKinley moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Consent Agenda.

- e. **Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - VOTE - Kyra Cook**

Tessa McKinley moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the warrants (see memo).

5. **FYI**

Marie Altieri read the names of the staff members who would be retiring at the end of June, noting that there were 6.5 days of school left. Congratulations and thank you to all!

Kyra Cook read that note at the bottom of the last day dismissal schedule:

“Breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinks will be sold daily from 9:00 -11:30 a.m. in the High School Cafeteria again this summer from June 27 – August 5 (closed on July 4th). For students who currently receive free or reduced lunch, their eligibility continues through the summer. For more information, contact Food Services Director, Kirsten Nelson at 978-264- 4700 x3221 or knelson@abschools.org.”

6. **Adjourn**

Tessa McKinley moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to adjourn the ABRSC at 8:37 p.m.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)

1. Congratulations to our FY22 Retirees!
2. Dismissal Schedule for June 21, last day of school
3. ABRSC Meetings for 2022-2023
4. FY23 ABRSC Members
5. FY22 ABRSC Policy Subcommittee Report
6. Student Enrollment, Jun 1, 2022
7. ABRSD Mascot Press Release, 5/20/22
8. Summer Reading Picks - Staff and Young Adults
9. [This Month in the Division of Open Government, May 2022](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:

- Agenda
- ABSAF memo, M. Altieri 6/3/22
- SEPAC Spring 2022 Update to the ABRSC, A. Gutierrez, A. Bailey, K Lafferty
- Changes to the ABRHS Handbook memo, J. Dean 6/8/22

- Draft minutes of ABRSC meeting on 5/19/22
- Draft minutes of ABRSC subcommittee meetings
- Warrant memo, D. Verdolino, 6/9/22
- 2022 ABRSD Retirees List
- Dismissal for the Last Day of School memo, P. Light 6/1/22
- ABRSC Meetings for FY23, 5/17/22
- ABRSC Members for FY23, 5/23/22
- FY22 ABRSC Policy Subcommittee Report
- ABRSD Monthly Enrollment, 6/1/22
- News Release: AB Selects “AB Revolution” for New Mascot, 5/20/22
- 2022 ABRSD Young Adult and Staff Picks for Summer Reading
- Public Participation Statement read by Martin Benson, 6/9/22